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ABSTRACT

The challenge of accelerating the process of modernization faces educators today in the Arab countries of the Middle East. This paper offers two propositions. The first is that the key to any purposeful innovation in society lies with the administrative systems of that society. The second is that the school in most third world countries represents the major educational institution capable of accelerating the modernization process. Consequently, the paper argues that the Arab countries of the Middle East must adopt advanced technologies in industry, defense, agriculture, and government, with priority given to improvement of the administrative systems of education. The paper discusses the problems of educational administration in the Middle East, its organizational structure, and the inadequacy of its information systems. It concludes that the school itself is in need of reform and change. Such change can be introduced only if educational administration is developed further to provide the necessary leadership and vision. (Author/LD)

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EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND THE CHALLENGE OF MODERNIZATION IN THE ARAB COUNTRIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST

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Note: A new challenge, heavily involving educators, faces the Arab countries of the Middle East. It is the challenge of accelerating the process of modernization. The objective is to generate conditions that are more favorable to industrialization and which also counter states of dependence and vulnerability now existing in the region. Education and educational administration have a significant role in this involvement. This is so because the challenge is seen, not in terms of accumulation

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of capital or investment in foreign markets, but in conditions favorable to adoption and operation of advanced technology created through goal-oriented and effective school programs and policies. Dr. Sara is ideally suited to examine this topic.
--Ed.

The period between the two world wars (1914-45) witnessed emergence of independent states in the Arab Middle East. The primary challenge that faced the newly established governments then was modernization, i.e., conversion of social, political, economic and educational institutions from tribal-feudal (in some cases nomadic) structures into legal, corporate, bureaucratic ones under uniform national laws and regulations. This process focused on strengthening of governmental bodies, development of national defense and security systems, improvement of health services, establishment of viable systems of free public education, land reform, monetary systems, and the like. All these are structural developments and may be viewed as a first phase of modernization.

The Arab Middle East today displays ample evidence that the first phase of modernization has been achieved. Government bodies, hospitals, schools, universities, industrial plants, financial institutions and a large complex of service organizations are not only well established but are also staffed by trained nationals, pointing to a degree of development of human resources. Also, the basic physical infrastructure is already built: dams and flood control systems, water supply and electricity, transportation systems (highways, seaports, airports, railroads), hospitals and health centers, banking, libraries, printing and publishing agencies, and others are now a real part of the total life experience of the people of the region. The verdict of fair observers is that the first generations of post-independence governments of the Arab states of the Middle East were successful in achieving a certain degree of modernity in a relatively short period of time and against adverse conditions.

New Challenge. In spite of progress achieved to date, countries of this region are seriously lagging behind Europe, the United States and others in a number of vital areas. This makes them dependent and vulnerable. They are dependent on Europe, the United States, Japan, and the Soviet Union in such basic aspects of living as defense, food supply, machinery, consumer goods, investment and, ultimately, the very direction and strength of national identity and will. This kind of dependence, though to a degree countered by vast economic resources, is bound to result in vulnerability. To shift from dependence to a state of interdependence, the Arab Middle East must now move into a phase of intensified use of advanced technology together with further development of human resources with requisite technological skills and attitudes and social orientation.

Two propositions are central to the thesis of this paper. The first is that the key to any purposeful innovation in society lies with the administrative systems of that society. The second is that the (common) school in most third world countries represents the major, if not the only, viable educational institution capable of accelerating the modernization process. Consequently, the argument is made that the Arab countries of the Middle East, now faced with a great challenge, must adopt advanced technologies in industry, defense, agriculture and government. Priority, however, must be given to improvement of the administrative systems of education. This necessitates examination of those systems and identification of their problems and inadequacies.

Modernization and Education

Modernity may be viewed as the application of technologies (or the use of inanimate sources of energy) to the control of natural resources in order to increase output. The literature on modernization points to two dimensions of modernity. The first is organizational/structural. This is concerned with the degree of specialization of social units, specificity of function, bureaucratization and centralization of control, and interdependence of units. To illustrate, more modernized societies are structured around more social units which are more specialized and bureaucratized, and which are more centralized and specific in their function than their counterparts in less modernized societies.[1] The second dimension is that of the individual and the extent to which he possesses characteristics of modernity such as openness to innovation and new experience, time orientation (toward present and future), involvement in planning and organizing activities, faith in science, low alienation, and high need for achievement.[2] A complex of influences is responsible for the making of a "modernized" person. The one force which assumes pre-eminence is education. The individual's degree of modernity is closely associated with the amount of schooling he has received.[3]

In addition to the assertion that modernity is related to amount of schooling, the control and dissemination of knowledge in third world countries is concentrated in the school. Other educative institutions (perhaps with the exception of organized religion) are not developed enough to have substantial effect as modernizing influences. In other words, mass media, factories, service organizations, among others, are yet to evolve to the point that they serve as influential modernizing forces equivalent to their counterparts in the more modernized countries of the world. This is one of the major differences between modern and traditional societies. As a result, formal education (or schooling) acquires great significance in modernization even when school programs are inadequate, narrow and weak.

The challenge facing the people of the Middle East must be met by all institutions at all levels: by social scientists, engineers, the military, industrialists, administrators and teachers. However, intelligent response is possible only if the school is successful in its mission of accelerating the process of modernization. The people of the Middle East have relied upon education for enlightenment and leadership; they now must look again to the school for leadership in setting objectives, changing attitudes and developing skills and competencies relevant to advanced technological systems.

Technological Gap and Transfer of Technology

The term technological gap suggests that developed countries differ from developing ones in degree of industrialization and technological innovation. The term also has been used to imply that certain societies are inherently technologically oriented while others are not; and therefore that leadership would be expected to remain in the hands of the former group of societies. This is not only a simplistic view of man and society, it is also a false view. Men can and do change, and societies do too. They evolve, grow, prosper, create, stagnate, disintegrate and die. For all these changes there are dynamics that give form and direction to human energy, and that accelerate or retard the creative and self-renewing process in the lives of human groups.

Nonetheless, a great technological gap does exist between the leading industrialized societies and the Middle East. Because of the enormity of this gap,

people of the Middle East do not aspire now to develop an advanced form of specialized indigenous technology with which to compete in the international market place. Rather, economists and other social scientists and engineers in the region have opted for selective transfer of technology. The word "selective" is significant here as it relates to decisions regarding cultural readiness, potential for successful transplant of specific technologies into the existing body of culture, and also the potential for developing technologies of strategic value (economic, social, political) for the people of the region. Full use is to be made of technological developments elsewhere, but, more important is the potential for quick installation of specific technological developments within the educational, economic, productive and social institutions of the Middle East.

The process of transfer of technology, naturally, is not the simple purchase and importing of technology. If it were, at least the rich countries of the Middle East would have no problem bridging the technological gap. The vast resources of such countries as Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Libya and Iraq are surely sufficient for purchasing the most advanced of all available technologies in the world and installing them and making them operational even though this may mean importing highly specialized personnel to man the machinery. The lesson that has been learned, probably more painfully than was necessary, is that transfer of technology is far more complex a process than importing of computers and industrial plants: it is a process by which a culture is examined, assessed, and developed to generate patterns of behavior, skills and value systems compatible with the requisites of operating complex industrial plants and advanced technological systems. The challenge is all this plus the added consideration of maintaining internal equilibrium in the face of powerful dynamics that inevitably will be generated by technological growth.

The Managerial Gap

Former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara was among the first to attribute the great technological achievement of America to management. He made the following observation:

> I believe that the technological gap (between the U.S. and the rest of the world) is misnamed. It is not so much a technological gap as it is a managerial gap (emphasis mine).[4]

He went on to say that society could not grow and develop without effective administration. In other words, the key to everything that happens in society, the setting of objectives, development of policies, use of human and material resources, and the manner in which all these things happen is to be found in the organizational and procedural modes that exist in that society, i.e., its administrative systems. This point became the central theme of an excellent and very important book by Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber[5] who makes the point that Europe lags behind the United States not because of such factors as capital and scientific discovery (for 90 percent of the capital used by American corporations in Europe is raised in Europe, and European universities are proven centers of scientific research), but because the cultural/political systems of Europe have not produced the decentralized, flexible and highly coordinated management organization that the United States has developed and brought to a high level of perfection.

It is clear that administrative systems are not found, nor do they operate, in a cultural vacuum. They grow and take form from the very cultural base that

regulates human interaction. Attitudes, values, and assumptions about the individual, freedom, responsibility, trust, intelligence, etc., and locus and use of power are all vital dynamics that produce and sustain society's administrative systems. Further, administrative organizations are enriched or weakened by the presence of other organizations and the way those are integrated to make them mutually supportive of each other.[6] A case in point is the highly significant contributions made by schools and universities in the United States to technological advances in agriculture and industry.[7] Another illustration of this point can be made in terms of decision-making processes in large, modern organizations. Effective decision making is possible only when relevant information is available to provide options and predict consequences. Information systems upon which complex decision making depends, are technological systems and depend upon highly developed societal institutions. So is the case with communication systems, training programs, higher education, research centers, and others.

Educational Administration

An organization is as viable as the administrative system that governs it and gives it direction. Schools, universities, training institutes and research centers become goal oriented and responsive only if they are managed to become so. The challenge to modernization in the Middle East is directly and intimately related to educational administrative systems. Industrial, social and political systems will be able to develop only so far as the capabilities of their personnel would permit. The extent to which schools can educate for a technological society will determine the extent to which a society can advance on the path of modernization. Because of the significance and scope of power vested in the administrative organization of the education systems of the Middle East, effectiveness of response is largely a function of the viability of the structure, mode of operation, indeed the very concept of administration together with the capability of the administrative cadres that staff the system to provide vision and leadership. The remaining part of this report is concerned with the present administrative systems of countries of the Middle East. The focus is upon identifying major problems and weaknesses that must be dealt with; for it is evident that, unless effective administration is provided education, the new challenge will not be met.

Problems of Educational Administration in the Middle East

The observation is commonly made that the study and practice of educational administration often lags behind industrial, business and general administration. While the ideal organization is yet to evolve, industrial and business organizations are usually more responsive and innovative than are educational administrative organizations. Further, organizations, no matter how effective they may be, are in continuous need of appraisal and change in order to remain responsive and productive.

A number of readily verifiable observations can be made about educational administration in the Arab countries of the Middle East. That they have maintained at least a minimum level of effectiveness is rather obvious for this can be inferred from the fact that schools in the region are open and functioning. There also have been great quantitative growth in enrollment and numbers of schools (often averaging more than 10 percent per year), some innovations in curriculum, adult education, and school buildings, and some promising developments in compulsory education. Yet, close observation of administrative systems leads to detection of a number of serious problems. For the purpose of clarity, four clusters of problems are presented.

These problem clusters are found in varying degrees in the countries of this region. Note that no effort is made to delineate the extent to which any given problem is present in any particular country.

Concept of Administration[8]

At the root of all behavior is a structure of concepts and ideas. The views held by administrators regarding their roles, proper modes of interaction and appropriate attitudes and behavior are important determinants of organizational behavior. In order to provide a point of reference, it is desirable to think of administration as a process that involves vision, sensitivity to existing needs, initiation of new structures of procedure, interpretation of policy, facilitation of the work of others, coordination, and other related elements. To the extent that administrators perceive their roles to be inclusive of the above elements, they will engage in positive behaviors. The reverse is probably true.

One of the major problems in this regard is the view held by administrators that administration is the routinized execution of decisions and policies handed down from higher levels. As such, administration becomes narrowly defined, rigid and void of creativity in dealing with new situations. Further, it lessens the degree of involvement of administrators in the performance of their duties since there is little opportunity for them to develop and test new approaches or use personal judgment in treating problems as they arise.

A second concept which is closely related is that of viewing administration as a set of procedures that are applied to all situations in the organization in order to produce uniformity, control and discipline in the performance of tasks and functions. This produces over-reliance on uniform routinized procedures at the expense of innovativeness and creativity in dealing with unique individual situations. Administrators deal with a large number of situations daily. While routine procedures must be used, each case must be considered before decisions are made, for there are always new situations and new factors where routine processing becomes irrelevant or counter-productive.

Another concept, also unduly limited, is that of viewing administration as power. Power is vested in a position so that certain decisions can be made and operations carried out legitimately. Often, however, this power becomes personalized and the administrator sees himself as a chief and boss rather than as leader and facilitator. This results in forms of etiquette that govern the interactions of superordinate and subordinate, governor and governed, and administrator with organizational member or the public at large. Personalized power also tends to establish an aura of infallibility that administrators project and which results in increasing the distance between the public and the schools, and between various hierarchies within the system of education itself. Another damaging consequence is that the exercise of personalized power increases the tendency of employees to adhere to form at the expense of critical and intelligent involvement in organizational objectives and concerns.

Organizational Structure of Educational Administration

Formal organizations are social units that are deliberately formed for the purpose of achieving specific goals. They are mostly structured according to such principles as division of labor and specialization, unity of command, hierarchical flow of authority, span of control, and flow of communication. All systems of

education in the Arab countries are administered by central ministries of education aided by district or provincial offices of education which serve as links between the central authority and the schools. Based on examination of organizational charts of ministries of education in twelve Arab countries,[9] the following problems are identified:

a) Excessive centralization. The type of organization common to most countries of the Middle East is the so-called "tall organization." These organizations are extremely hierarchical in structure. In certain Middle East countries there are five or six levels of hierarchical structure in the ministry of education augmented by two or three hierarchies in the district or provincial office of education. Lower level positions are primarily "link" or communication positions with only minor or no decision-making powers. Decisions are made centrally, at or near the top of the organizational pyramid. Not only are decisions regarding such matters as curricula, textbooks, national examinations, and appointment and promotion of teachers made centrally, but also those pertaining to food service, library materials, instructional supplies, school calendar, maintenance, and even certain cases of discipline.

The primary function of school principals under these conditions is to carry out orders, implement programs and enforce rules and regulations often without participation in the development of policies and programs. To illustrate, teachers are appointed to their schools without first being interviewed by their prospective principals; principals and teachers rarely, if ever, are involved in curriculum development or evaluation.

The system is top-heavy in relation to the number of positions provided. For example, the Ministry of Education in Kuwait (total population is approximately 800,000) boasts, in addition to the Minister of Education, a General Vice Minister, four Vice Ministers, and seventeen departments each headed by a director to whom several administrators report. In Egypt, there are twenty-five General Directorates that operate under the jurisdiction of six Vice Ministers who, together with fourteen other General Directorates and special councils and commissions, report to the Minister of Education. No chart is large enough to explicate the middle and lower hierarchies in that organization.

Efforts are being made to introduce a measure of decentralization in education. In Saudi Arabia, for example, the role of the school principal was examined carefully, then restructured with expanded decision-making powers.[10]

b) Separation between instructional and administrative affairs in the organization. An artifical duality can be seen in <u>all</u> administrative systems of education in the Arab countries. The usual structure is built by clustering instructional affairs (curriculum, textbooks, supervision, research, audio-visuals) under the command of one or more so-called technical (i.e., instructional) officers, while purely administrative affairs (finance, purchasing, buildings, maintenance, food service, school health, etc.,) are handled by another group of officers. The administrative and instructional departments are clearly separated from each other, and there is little coordination between the two divisions.

This results in subjugating instructional decisions to the practical mandates of management, or in limiting administration as a marginal, even inconsequential element in the operation of the system. This condition of organization, it is believed, has hindered the development of educational administration as a field because of the lack of integration of education and administration.

c) Organization development. There is need, especially in large organizations, for specialized organization development units that are responsible for reviewing the structure and procedural systems of the organization and for recommending new structures, initiating corrective action and keeping the organization responsive to its internal and external environments. These offices are usually staffed by specialists in organization and management who can bring expert knowledge to bear on solving problems of coordination, conflict, priorities, bottlenecks, and the like. Without such specialized units, organizational growth is handicapped, organizational problems are not properly detected and understood, and the organization functions below its optimum level.

Examination of the organizational structures of the ministries of education in the Arab countries reveals that only two of them have special "organization and management units" that are responsible for organizational development.

Inadequacy of Information Systems

Rational decision making is dependent upon the quality of information. To the extent that the system generates and processes data about its operations and interaction with its environment, decision makers can determine needs, predict consequences, spot trouble, and select from a broader array of options. Presence of an effective information system is, therefore, essential to effective administration.

Information systems are generally inadequate in the Middle East. Although all ministries of education have specialized units that are responsible for collecting and organizing educational statistical data (usually called documentation and statistics centers or units), very little research is done in such units.[11] Their primary function seems to be production of annual statistical documents containing data on enrollment, number of teachers and schools, attrition rates, and the like. Data on socio-economic background of students, educational expenditures, teachers' salaries, and data relevant to student achievement, learning difficulties, and curriculum evaluation are yet to be developed and reported by such units. Research, in the more exact meaning of the term, is rarely attempted by the ministries of education of the region. Neither has higher education contributed significantly in the area of research. In fact, educational administrative systems in the Middle East seem to be isolated from the intellectual environment of the universities. A close interactive relationship between the universities and the ministries of education is needed to generate information necessary for rational decision making in education.

The Administrative Cadre

Many students of administration agree that the human resource is more important than any other organizational element. To a large extent, the way a system operates is directly related to the skills, capabilities and values of the incumbents, especially those occupying administrative positions.

The great majority of all principals, supervisors and central office administrators are appointed to administrative positions without any training in administration. A majority of those spend a life career in performing administrative duties without the benefit of even short workshops or other type of inservice training.[12] Several reasons can be cited for this obvious deficiency. First, courses in educational administration in most universities are part of graduate programs. Since the majority of persons in education rarely go beyond the B.A. or B.S. level (and a substantial percentage stop at two years of college), it is understandable that very few of all administrators in the Middle East have any pre-service training in educational administration. Second, there is scarcity in educational administration programs in the universities of the region. A quick review of the catalogues of the major universities of the region shows that programs in educational administration are either new and small or are not in existence. Third, inservice training programs in educational administration are limited both in number and in size. Administrators who feel the need for further study are often discouraged because of lack of incentives or great geographic distance of universities and training centers, or because of cost. There are few opportunities for administrators to participate in state-sponsored training programs since these are limited in number and frequency.

Another problem that affects performance of educational administrators is rapid change in the administrative cadre. Because of great economic growth and of expansion in the educational systems of the region, there are great opportunities for educational administrators to move upward within the system or to move into more enticing positions out of it. The tenure of incumbents in administrative positions is becoming rather short. While this is beneficial to the individual, it creates problems for the organization. The effects are particularly serious in such areas of function as implementation of long-term programs, monitoring, follow-up and evaluation, organization development, and the like. In general, the system suffers from discontinuity and disruption of policies and procedures and from frequent adjustments that have to be made when unit heads and division directors are changed.

There are encouraging trends. Governments are becoming more aware of training needs of educational administrators, and a few good attempts have already involved several groups of administrators. In Saudi Arabia, for example, the Ministry of Education has provided for inservice training of principals and some Ministry personnel. Principals in Jordan are receiving training through a special training institute in order to meet certification requirements. Also, the UNESCO Regional Office for Education in the Arab Countries (in Beirut, Lebanon) has organized several intensive inservice programs for principals, supervisors and high-ranking administrators. More examples can be cited, but all these are still limited in their scope. Greater effort is needed to provide comprehensive training programs, (both pre-service and inservice) to various groups of administrators and to provide incentives and follow-up activities to increase their effectiveness.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly there are other problems that stand in the way of effective leadership in the education systems of the Arab countries. Micro-level research would delineate the particular inadequacies of each system and point to specific remedies. At present, effectiveness of educational leadership, as represented and structured in the present cadre and administrative organization, is inadequate in the face of a great challenge. Growth is possible, but only if certain conditions are met.

There is a developed infrastructure, both physical and human/institutional, and there is great wealth in the region. In the absence of other significant educative agencies, the school is the major institution capable of providing the necessary thrust for accelerating modernization and preparing society for adoption and use of advanced technological systems. But the school itself is in need of reform and change, and such change can be introduced only if educational administration is developed further to provide the necessary leadership and vision.

There is need for a new kind of awareness. This is the awareness that response to a challenge, in fact all human progress, is not just a matter of accumulated capital or number of engineers although these are requisite elements. Progress is found in the human spirit: in the increased ability of men and women to think and to create. This is power, and it is generated by innovation and transformation of ideas and dreams into functioning structures. And those structures are both part of a living, developing culture and at the same time they are agents for its transformation.

Footnotes

[1]Marion J. Levy, Jr., Modernization and the Structure of Societies, 2 Vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), I: 7-129.

[2]Alex Inkeles, "The Modernization of Man," in Modernization: The Dynamics of Growth, ed. Myron Weiner (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1966), 138-150; Alan J. Peshkin, "The Impact of Schooling on Indian Students: A Study of Modernity" (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois, 1972), mimeographed.

[3]Alex Inkeles, "The Modernization of Man," in Modernization: The Dynamics of Growth, ed. Myron Weiner (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1966), 138-150; Alex Inkeles, "Making Men Modern: On the Causes and Consequences of Individual Change in Six Developing Countries," American Journal of Sociology 75 (1969): 208-225; Michael Armer, "Formal Education and Individual Modernity," American Journal of Sociology 76 (1971): 604-626.

[4]Robert S. McNamara, Speech at Millsaps College, Jackson, Mississippi, February 24, 1967.

[5]Jean-Jacques Sarvan-Schreiber, The American Challenge, trans. Ronald Steel (New York: Atheneum, 1968).

[6]William M. Evan, "The Organization-Set: Toward A Theory of Interorganizational Relations," in Approaches to Organizational Design, ed. James D. Thompson (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1966), 173-191.

[7]Harold F. Clark, "The Return on Educational Investment," in Perspectives on the Economic Returns of Education, ed. Charles S. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1963), 24-31.

[8]Many of the observations reported in this section were originally expressed in the Fourth Specialized Seminar on Modernization of Educational Administration in the Arab Countries, organized by the UNESCO Regional Office for Education in the Arab Countries, Beirut, Lebanon: November 13 - December 2, 1972.

[9]Bureau Regional de l'Unesco pour l'Education dans les Pays Arabes, Organigramme de Ministries de l'Education dans les Pays Arabes (Beirut, Lebanon: The Bureau, 1973).

[10]Nathir G. Sara, "Toward a New Role for Secondary School Principals in Saudi Arabia," presented to special seminar on the principalship at the Ministry of Education, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, May 1975.

[11]Nathir G. Sara, "Problems of Educational Research in the Middle East," International Review of Education 21 (March 1975), 75-90.

[12]Nathir G. Sara and Wesley Edwards, "Study of the Principalship in Jordan," presented to the Ministry of Education, Amman, Jordan: The Ford Foundation, March 6, 1973.

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